Plato's *Charmides*

Persons in the dialogue: Socrates (narrator), Chaerephon, Critias, Charmides.

153A We arrived back yesterday evening from the camp at Potidaea,[1] and as I was returning after a long absence, I was delighted to go to my familiar haunts. I went especially to the wrestling school of Taureas, the one opposite the Queen's Shrine, and I came across a lot of people there, most of whom were familiar to me, but there were also some whom I did not know. When they saw me coming in so unexpectedly, they immediately greeted me from all sides, **153B** and Chaerephon,[2] being the mad person he is, jumped up in their midst, ran toward me, took me by the hand and said, "Socrates, how did you survive the battle?"

A little before we left, there had been a battle at Potidaea which the people here had just heard about.

And in reply to him, I said, "Like this, just as you see me."

"Well it was reported here," said he, "that there had been **153C** an extremely fierce battle in which many people we know had died."

"And for the most part, that report is true," said I.

"Were you actually there in the battle?" he asked.

"I was there."

"Then sit down here," said he, "and tell us all about it, for we have not yet found out all the details with any clarity." And as he spoke, he led me over and seated me beside Critias,[3] the son of Callaeschrus. So I sat beside him, greeted Critias and the others, and then gave them a full account of the news from the camp, answering the various questions **153D** that each of them asked. Once we had had enough of such stories, I in turn questioned them about the state of affairs here, about the status of philosophy, and about the young people and whether any of them had proved to be especially notable for wisdom, or beauty, or both. Critias glanced over at the door **154A** and saw some young men coming in engaged in mutual banter and another group following behind.

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1 Potidaea was a colony in northern Greece established by the Corinthians. It was the site of a famous battle during the Peloponnesian War.

2 Chaerephon was Socrates' close friend who famously asked the oracle at Delphi whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates (*Aology* 21a). He appears in a number of Plato's dialogues.

3 Critias was a figure in Athenian political life. He was a first cousin of Plato's mother and eventually became a member of the Thirty Tyrants who assumed power in Athens after its defeat to Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. Among the Thirty, Critias was noted for his violence.

"Socrates," said he, "as far as the beautiful ones are concerned, I think you will get your answer straight away. Yes, those fellows who are coming in at the moment are leading the way, and they are lovers of the fellow who is regarded, nowadays at any rate, as the most beautiful of them all, and it looks to me as if the lad himself is already nearby."

"Who is he," I asked, "and whose son is he?"

"I presume you know him," he replied, "although he was not yet of age before you went away. **154B** He is Charmides,[4] the son of Glaucon, my uncle; so he is my cousin."

"I know him indeed, by Zeus," said I, "since he was remarkable even when he was still a boy, and I presume at this stage he is already quite a fine young man."

"You will know soon enough," said he, "how grown up he is and what he is like." And as he was saying all this, Charmides entered.

Now my friend, do not use me as the measure, for I am a white line on a white surface when it comes to beautiful people, since almost anyone who has come of age looks beautiful to me. Nevertheless, at that moment, **154C** the young man looked amazing to me, in stature and in beauty, and all the others seemed to be in love with him, they were so astounded and excited when he entered, and there were lots more lovers following behind too. Now for men of our age, this response was no great surprise, but I also paid attention to the young boys, and not one of them, not even the smallest of them, so much as glanced at anyone else. No, they all looked at him as though he were a statue. And Chaerephon **154D** called out to me, "Socrates, how does this young man look to you," he said, "isn't he fair of face?"

"Exceedingly so," said I.

"Yet if this fellow were willing to strip," said he, "you would think he had no face, so utterly beautiful is his physique."

Now the others all said the same thing as Chaerephon, and I said, "By Heracles, what an indomitable man you are describing if he happens to possess one additional quality, a minor one."

"What?" asked Critias.

154E **"**If he happens to have a well-developed soul," said I. "And since he belongs to your family, Critias, that is the sort of person he should presumably be."

"Yes," said he, "he is very noble and good in that sense too."

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[4] Charmides was an Athenian politician. He was Plato's uncle, and eventually became associated with the Thirty Tyrants, though it is unclear if he was actually a member of the Thirty. He is also mentioned in Plato's *Symposium* (222b), and *Protagoras* (315a).

"Well, why don't we strip this particular part of him and look at that, before we look at his body? For I am quite sure that he is now at an age when he is willing to engage in discourse."

"Very much so," said Critias, "and mark my words, he is also a lover of wisdom, **155A** and in the opinion of others, and of himself, quite a poet."

"This, Critias my friend, is a beauty that belongs in your family from the past through your ancestral connection with Solon. But why don't you call the young man over and show him to me? For presumably, even if he happened to be younger still, it would not embarrass him to converse with us in your presence, you who are both his guardian and his cousin."

"Yes, that's a good suggestion, Socrates," said he, "we will call him." And with **155B** that he said to his attendant, "Boy, call Charmides and say that I want to introduce him to a physician, in relation to that ailment he told me he was suffering from yesterday. Then Critias turned to me and explained, "In fact he said recently that he has a headache when he gets up in the morning, so what is to stop you from pretending to him that you know a remedy for a headache?"

"Nothing," said I, "just let him come over."

"Oh, he will come," said he.

Well that is what actually happened. Indeed he arrived and caused a great deal **155C** of laughter. For in order to make room for Charmides to sit beside him, each of us who were already seated pushed eagerly against his neighbour until the fellow seated at one end had to stand up, and we knocked the fellow at the other end off sideways. Then Charmides came and sat between myself and Critias. There and then, my friend, I was already at a loss, and my former confidence was knocked out of me, the confidence that I could converse with him quite easily. But when Critias was explaining that I was the one who knew the remedy, the lad looked into my eyes **155D** in a manner that defies description, sat up as if to ask me a question, and everyone in the Palaestra[5] surged all around us in a circle. Then indeed, my noble friend, I beheld the inside of his garment and I was inflamed, and was no longer in myself, and I decided that when it came to love, Cydias[6] was the wisest poet. When speaking of a beautiful boy, he advised someone that 'the fawn should be careful when he arrives in front of a lion, lest he be seized as a piece of meat.' **155E** Indeed, I thought that I myself had been captured by a creature of this sort. Nevertheless, when he asked if I knew the remedy for the headache, I somehow replied with difficulty that I knew it.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

And I replied that it was a certain leaf, but in addition to the remedy there was also a certain incantation, and if a person were to chant this at the same time as he used the remedy, the

[5] Palaestrae were ancient Greek wrestling schools.

[6] Cydias was a poet about whom little is known.

remedy would make him completely healthy, but without the incantation, the leaf would be of no benefit.

156A "Then I will write down the incantation. Call it out."

"Shall I do it only if you persuade me," said I, "or even if you do not?"

So he laughed and said, "If I persuade you, Socrates."

"So be it," said I, "and are you certain of my name?"

"Unless I am doing you wrong," said he, "for amongst my own age group you are talked about quite a lot, and I also remember you associating with Critias here, even when I was a child."

"Well done," said I, "yes, I shall speak more openly **156B** to you about the kind of incantation it happens to be. I was at a loss just now as to how I might show you its power, Charmides, for this sort of incantation is unable to make the head alone healthy. Rather, just as you may already have heard from the good physicians, whenever someone comes to them with sore eyes, they say, somehow, that they cannot attempt to treat the eyes on their own, but it would also be necessary to treat the head at the same time, if the eyes **156C** are to be in good condition. And what is more, it is highly irrational to think the head could ever be treated just by itself without treating the whole body. So based on this principle, they endeavour to treat and to cure the part, along with the whole, by regimens applicable to the entire body. Aren't you aware that this is what they say and that this is how matters stand?"

"Entirely so," he replied.

"In that case, do you think I am expressing this well, and do you accept the principle?"

"Without reservation," he replied.

156D When I heard his approval I recovered my confidence, my courage gradually revived once more, and my spirit was rekindled. I said, "Well that is the sort of incantation this is, Charmides. I learned it up there on campaign from one of the Thracian physicians of Zalmoxis,[7] who are also said to confer immortality. The Thracian said that Greek physicians who say what I just told you are right to say so. 'But,' said he, 'Zalmoxis, our king, who is a god, says that **156E** just as one should not attempt to cure eyes without head, or head without body, so one should not attempt to cure body without curing soul. This is the reason why so many diseases evade the Greek physicians; it is because they disregard the whole, which needs to be cared for, because if the whole is not in good condition it is impossible for the part to be well. For,' said he, 'everything comes forth from the soul, both what is good and what is bad for the body, and for the entire person. These flow from there, just as they flow from the head to the eyes. **157A** So it is necessary to treat that first and foremost, if any part of

[7] Zalmoxis was a scholar who was worshipped as a deity by the Getae people in Thrace in northern Greece.

the head or of the rest of the body is to be in a good condition.' And he said, 'blessed man, the soul is treated with certain incantations, and these incantations are beautiful words. From such words as these, sound-mindedness is engendered in our souls, and once it has been engendered, and is present, it is easy at that stage to provide health to the head and to the rest of the body **157B** too.' So when teaching me about the remedy and the incantations, he said, 'Let no one who has not first submitted his soul to be treated by you with the incantation, persuade you to treat his head. And indeed,' said he, 'this is the mistake some physicians make in treating people nowadays; they endeavour to be physicians of sound-mindedness, and of bodily health, separately.' And he commanded me, quite forcibly, to allow no one, no matter how wealthy, well-born or handsome he might be, to persuade **157C** me to do otherwise. So since I have sworn an oath and it is necessary that I obey it, I shall obey it. As for you, if you wish to follow the orders of the stranger, and first submit your soul to be enchanted by the Thracian charms, I shall then apply the leaf to your head. If not, we do not know what we should do with you, dear Charmides."

Now, when Critias heard me saying this, he said, "This headache could turn out to be a godsend for the young man, Socrates, if he will be compelled to improve his thinking because of his head. **157D** But, I tell you, Charmides is not regarded as superior to the rest of his age group for his looks alone, but also for the quality for which you claim to have the incantation. You say it is for sound-mindedness, don't you?"

"Very much so," I replied.

"Well, mark my words," he said, "he is regarded, far and away, as the most sound-minded lad there is nowadays, and in all other respects he is as good as anyone else of that age."

"And indeed, Charmides," said I, "it is only right that you should be superior to the others **157E** in all qualities of this sort. Indeed I do not think anyone else here could so easily point to two families in Athens that, united and combined, are likely to beget more noble and exalted offspring than the families you were born from. Indeed your father's family, the family of Critias,[8] son of Dropides, eulogised by Anacreon, Solon and many other poets, has been presented to us as superior in nobility and excellence, **158A** and in anything else that counts as happiness. And the same goes for your mother's family, since it is said that no one on the continent was reputed to be a more noble and influential man than your uncle Pyrilampes,[9] when he went on embassies to the Great King or to anyone else on the continent. And this side of your family, in its entirety, is not at all inferior to the other.

"So, sprung from such families as these, it is likely that you are foremost in everything. Now from what we can see of your physique, **5158B** dear son of Glaucon, I do not think you have fallen below the standard of any of your forebears in any respect, and if you really are

[8] This is the grandfather of the Critias in this dialogue. And, although it is still a matter of dispute, this Critias is thought to be the one who appears in Plato's *Timaeus*, and who is the main speaker in Plato's *Critias*.
[9] Pyrilampes was an Athenian statesman and stepfather of Plato. He served as Athenian ambassador to the Persian Empire.

naturally endowed with enough sound-mindedness too, and the other qualities our friend here mentioned, then your mother bore a blessed son indeed, dear Charmides.

"So this is how matters stand. If, as Critias here says, sound-mindedness is already present in you, and you are sufficiently sound-minded, you no longer have need of the incantations of Zalmoxis or of Abaris the Hyperborean,[10] and you should be given the head remedy **158C** straightaway. But if you seem, as yet, to be deficient in these, you should chant the incantation before you are given the remedy. So tell me yourself, whether you agree with this man. Do you claim that you already possess enough sound-mindedness, or are you deficient in this?"

Now Charmides blushed at first, and appeared even more beautiful, since his modesty suited his years. Then he answered in a dignified manner, and said that it would not be easy in the present situation either to admit or deny what he had been asked. **158D**

"Indeed," said he, "if I say I am not sound-minded, this is not just a strange thing to say against oneself, but at the same time I would be proving Critias here a liar, and many others too who regard me as sound-minded because this man says so. Then again, if I say that I am sound-minded and sing my own praises, that will surely appear offensive. So I do not know how I am to answer you."

And I said, "That sounds reasonable to me, Charmides. And in my opinion we should jointly consider whether or not you have acquired **158E** what I am asking you about, so that you are not forced to say what you do not wish to say, nor shall I for my part, turn my hand to medical treatment without due deliberation. So if it is acceptable to you, I want to consider this along with you. If not, let us leave it."

"Well," said he, "nothing could be more acceptable. So to that end let's consider this in whatever manner you yourself think better."

"Then," said I, "I think our investigation into this is best conducted as follows. Indeed it is obvious that if sound-mindedness is present in you, you are able **159A** to form some opinion about it. For once sound-mindedness is in you, if it is actually in you, it must, I presume, produce a certain awareness from which you would have some opinion about it, as to what sound-mindedness is and what sort of thing it is. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I think so," he replied.

"In that case," said I, "since in fact you know how to speak Greek, I am sure you could also say what this appears to you to be."

"Perhaps," said he.

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[10] Abaris the Hyperborean was a legendary sage and priest of Apollo who was endowed with the gift of prophecy.

“Well then,” said I, “so that we may hazard a guess as to whether sound-mindedness is in you, or not, you should tell us what you say sound-mindedness is in your opinion.”

159B Initially he was reluctant and did not really want to answer, but then he said that in his opinion, sound-mindedness is doing everything in an orderly manner and quietly; in walking on the streets, in conversation and doing everything else in a similar fashion. “And in my opinion,” said he, “what you are asking me about is, in short, a certain quietness.”

“Well now,” said I, “is this right? People do say, at any rate, that those who are quiet are sound-minded, so let us see if they have a point. **159C** Tell me then, wouldn’t you say sound-mindedness is something good?”

“Entirely so,” he replied.

“Well, for the writing teacher, is it best to write similar letters quickly or quietly?”[11]

“Quickly.”

“And what about reading? Is it good to do so quickly or quietly?”

“Quickly.”

“Yes, and are playing the harp quickly, and wrestling nimbly, much better than doing so quietly and slowly?”

“Yes.”

“What about boxing and the pankration? Isn’t the situation the same?”

“Entirely so.”

“In running and jumping too, and in all activities of the body, aren’t those that occur nimbly **159D** and quickly the good ones, while those that are done with difficulty and quietly the bad ones?”

“Apparently.”

“Then it is apparent to us that what is best, in the case of the body at any rate, is not what is quietest but what is quickest and nimblest. Is this so?”

“Entirely so.”

“And was sound-mindedness something good?”

“Yes.”

[11] The Greek word *hēsuchei* can mean either “quietly” or “slowly.”

“Then, in the case of the body at least, not quietness but quickness would be more sound-minded, since sound-mindedness is something good.”

“So it seems,” said he.

159E “What about this?” said I. “Which is better, ease of learning or difficulty in learning?”

“Ease of learning.”

“And does ease of learning involve learning quickly, while difficulty in learning involves learning quietly and slowly?”

“Yes.”

“And isn’t it better to teach someone else quickly and energetically rather than quietly and slowly?”

“Yes.”

“What about this? Is it better to recollect and to remember quietly and slowly or energetically and quickly?”

“Energetically and quickly,” he replied.

160A “And isn’t quick-wittedness a certain nimbleness of the soul, rather than a quietness?”

“True.”

“And for the writing teacher and harp teacher or anyone else, isn’t it best to understand what is said, not as quietly as possible but as quickly as possible?”

“Yes.”

“Then again, in the investigations of the soul and in deliberation, it is not the quietest person, I think, or the one who deliberates and makes discoveries with difficulty, who seems to be worthy of praise, but **160B** the one who does this most easily and quickly.”

“This is so,” he said.

“Therefore, Charmides,” said I, “in actions, whether they concern the soul or the body, do those that are quickest and nimblest appear nobler to us than those that are slowest and quietest?”

“Quite likely,” said he.

“So sound-mindedness would not be quietness, nor would the sound-minded life be quiet, at least on the basis of this argument, since it must be good if it is sound-minded. And so, there are two possibilities, **160C** either there are no circumstances where quiet actions in life are

better than quick and vigorous ones, or there are very few. But, my friend, even if it is the case that just as many quiet actions as vigorous and quick ones happen to be good, not even on this basis would sound-mindedness consist more in acting quietly than in acting energetically and quickly, either in walking, in talking, or in anything else. Nor would the quiet orderly life be more sound-minded **160D** than the one that is not quiet. This is because, in our argument, we included sound-mindedness with the good, yet the quick actions have turned out to be no less good than the quiet ones."

"I think, Socrates," said he, "that what you have said is correct."

"Then, Charmides," said I, "once again, pay even closer attention to yourself, look into yourself, reflect upon the sort of person sound-mindedness makes you by its presence, and what it must be like in order to produce such an effect, and once you have drawn your conclusions from all this, declare nicely and courageously **160E** what does it appear to you to be?

And he paused, scrutinised himself very courageously and said, "Well it seems to me that sound-mindedness makes a person ashamed and produces modesty, and modesty is what sound-mindedness actually is."

"Well," said I, "didn't we agree just now that sound-mindedness is something good?"

"Entirely so," he replied.

"And aren't the sound-minded men also good?"

"Yes."

"Now could something that does not produce good men be good?"

"Of course not."

"So sound-mindedness is not only noble, it is also good."

161A "Yes, I think so."

"What is this?" said I, "don't you believe Homer when he says 'Modesty is not a good companion for a needy man'?"[12]

"I do," said he.

"So modesty is, it seems, both not good and good."

"Apparently."

[12] *Odyssey* xvii.347.

“And yet, sound-mindedness is good if its presence really does make people good and not bad.”

“Why, yes, I think that is how matters stand, just as you say.”

“Then sound-mindedness would not be modesty since it actually happens to be **161B** good, while modesty is no more good than bad.”

“Well Socrates, it seems to me that what you are saying is correct, but consider this, what do you think of the following statement about sound-mindedness? Indeed I have just remembered hearing someone say that sound-mindedness would be ‘doing what belongs to yourself.’ Now consider whether the person who said this was correct in saying so, in your opinion.”

“You wretch,” said I, “you have heard this from Critias here, or from someone **161C** else who is wise.”

“It seems he heard it from someone else,” said Critias, “since it certainly was not from me.”

“Socrates, what difference does it make from whom I heard it?” said Charmides.

“None,” I replied, “for we should not really consider who said this, but whether what is being said is true or not.”

“Now you are speaking aright,” said he.

“Yes, by Zeus,” said I, “but if we find out what it means I would be surprised, for it seems like some sort of riddle.”

“Why is that?” he asked.

161D “Because the speaker,” said I, “in saying that sound-mindedness is doing what belongs to you, did not intend the words in the way that he expressed them. Or do you think the writing teacher does nothing whenever he writes or reads?”

“No,” he replied, “I think he does something.”

“So do you think the grammar teacher only writes and reads his own name or teaches you boys to do this too? Or did you write the names of your enemies no less than those of yourselves and your friends?”

“No less.”

“Well, in this respect, were you being a busybody and not being sound-minded in doing so?”

161E “Not at all.”

“And yet, you were not doing what belongs to yourselves if writing and reading is ‘doing something’.”

“And so they are.”

“And indeed, my friend, healing, housebuilding, weaving, or performing any of the tasks of a skill, by any skill whatsoever, is presumably ‘doing something’.”

“Entirely so.”

“What about this? Do you think a city would be well administered under this law, calling upon each person to weave and wash his own garment, to cobble his own shoes, make his own oil-flask and scraper, and everything else, on the same principle; that each person should not touch what belongs to others [162A] but work at, and do, what belongs to himself?”

“No, I do not think so,” he replied.

“And yet,” said I, “the city that is administered sound-mindedly would be well administered.”

“How could it not be?” said he.

“So performing actions of this sort, and doing what belongs to you in this way, would not be sound-mindedness,” said I.

“Apparently not.”

“So the person who said that doing what belongs to yourself is sound-mindedness was, it seems, speaking a riddle, as I said just now. For I presume he was not quite so simple minded. [162B] Or did you hear some foolish fellow saying this, Charmides?”

“Far from it,” he replied, “in fact he seemed to be extremely wise.”

“Well then, I am of the opinion, to an even greater extent, that he posed a riddle as to the difficulty of recognising what exactly ‘doing what belongs to yourself’ is.”

“Perhaps,” said he.

“Well what exactly would ‘doing what belongs to yourself’ be? Can you say?”

“By Zeus, I do not know,” he replied, “but perhaps even the person who said this did not know what he intended. And as he said this he smiled and glanced over at Critias.

[162C] Now, Critias had obviously been quite agitated for some time, and being eager to impress Charmides and the company, he had restrained himself with difficulty in the previous discussion, but at this stage he was unable to do so. Indeed the suspicion I held now seemed to be all the more true, that Charmides had heard this answer about sound-mindedness from Critias. So Charmides, who did not wish to furnish an account of the answer himself, but wanted Critias to do so instead, kept stirring up [162D] Critias, and pointing out that he himself

had been refuted. But Critias could not bear this. Rather, he seemed to me to be angry with Charmides, just like a poet, with an actor who recites his compositions badly. So he looked at him and said, "Charmides, do you really think that if you do not know what exactly the person who said that sound-mindedness is 'doing what belongs to yourself' intended, the man himself did not know either?"

"But Critias, best of men," said I, "it is no surprise **162E** that he does not understand this at his age. But I expect you are likely to know on account of your age and your experience. So if you concur that sound-mindedness is what this fellow says it is, and you take over the argument, I would much prefer to investigate along with you whether the statement is true or not."

"Yes, I concur, emphatically, and I am taking over," he said.

"Well you are acting quite nobly," said I. "Tell me then, do you also concur about what I was asking just now, that all craftsmen make something?"

"I do."

163A "Now do they seem to you to make only what belongs to themselves, or also what belongs to others?"

"What belongs to others too."

"So are they being sound-minded, even though they are not making only what belongs to themselves?"

"Is there any reason why not?" he replied.

"None, for me at least," said I. "But look, there may be one for the man who proposes that sound-mindedness is 'doing what belongs to oneself', and then says there is no reason why those who make what belongs to others cannot be sound-minded too."

"Yes, presumably I have agreed," said he, "that those who do what belongs to others are sound-minded, if I agreed that those who make what belongs to others are sound-minded."

163B "Tell me," said I, "don't you call making and doing the same?"

"I certainly do not," he replied. "Nor working and making either, for I learned from Hesiod who said that 'work is no disgrace.'[13] But do you actually think that if he called the sort of works you referred to just now, 'working' and 'doing', he could accept that there is no disgrace in someone being a cobbler, a fishmonger or a prostitute? Don't you believe it, Socrates. No, this man too, in my opinion, considered **163C** 'making' as other than 'doing' and 'working', and although something one makes is sometimes a disgrace whenever it is not accompanied by nobility, no work is ever a disgrace. For whatever is made nobly and

[13] *Works and Days* 311.

beneficially, these he called works, and he referred to ‘makings’ of this sort as ‘workings’ and ‘doings’. And we should say that he believed that the like of these alone are kindred to us, while those that are harmful are all alien. And so we should presume that Hesiod, and any other man of understanding, calls the person doing what belongs to himself, sound-minded.”

163D “Critias“ said I, “I understood your argument almost as soon as you began, that you call what is kindred to us and what belongs to ourselves, good, and you call the ‘makings’ of the good people ‘doings.’ And indeed I have heard Prodicus drawing thousands of such distinctions about words. Well, I allow you to employ each of the words in any way you wish, only please make clear in every case what you are applying the name to. So now, once more, from the beginning, define this more clearly. **163E** The doing or making, or however you wish to name it, of what is good, is this what you say sound-mindedness is?”

“I do,” he replied.

“So the person who does what is bad is not sound-minded, but the person who does what is good, is.”

“Best of men,” said he, “isn’t this how it seems to you?”

“Never mind that,” said I, “let us not consider my opinion at this stage, but what you are now saying.”

“Well then, I deny,” said he, “that someone who makes what is not good, but bad, is sound-minded. Rather, someone who makes what is good, but not bad, is sound-minded. For I am defining sound-mindedness in plain terms for you, as doing what is good.”

164A “And there is, perhaps,” said I, “no reason why you should not be speaking the truth. Yet I am wondering if you think sound-minded people are unaware of being sound-minded.”

“No, I do not think so,” he replied.

“Didn’t you say a little earlier,” I asked, “that there is no reason why craftsmen, even those who make what belongs to others, cannot be sound-minded?”

“Yes, I said so,” he replied, “what of it?”

“Nothing, but please tell me whether you think a physician, when making **164B** someone healthy, makes something that is beneficial both to himself and to the person he treats?”

“I think so.”

“Isn’t someone who is doing this, doing what is needed?”

“Yes.”

“Isn’t someone who is doing what is needed, sound-minded?”

“Sound-minded, indeed.”

“Now is it also necessary for the physician to recognise when he is applying the treatment beneficially and when he is not, and for each of the craftsmen to recognise when he is going to gain an advantage from the work he is doing, and when not?”

“Perhaps not.”

“In that case,” said I, “having done something beneficially, or harmfully, the physician **164C** sometimes does not recognise, himself, how he has done it, even though according to your argument, in doing it beneficially he has done it sound-mindedly. Isn’t this how you put it?”

“I did.”

“And so it seems, in doing something beneficially, even though he does it sound-mindedly, and is sound-minded, he is sometimes unaware, himself, of being sound-minded.”

“But, Socrates,” said he, “this could never happen, and if you think that anything I accepted earlier leads necessarily to this conclusion, I would rather **164D** retract any of them, and I would not be ashamed to say I had been wrong, rather than ever concede that a person who is, himself, unaware of himself, is sound-minded. Indeed, I would almost declare that this is just what sound-mindedness is, recognising oneself, and I go along with whomever set up such an inscription in Delphi. In fact, I think this inscription was set up in this way as an actual salutation by the god to those who enter, instead of ‘Hail’, because this **164E** salutation, ‘Hail’, is not right, nor should we exhort one another to this, but to ‘be sound-minded.’ So the god addresses those who enter the temple in this way somewhat differently than we humans do, and whoever set up the inscription had this in mind, in my opinion. And to anyone who ever enters, he says just one thing, ‘be sound-minded’. And indeed he speaks somewhat enigmatically, like a seer, for ‘Know Thyself’ and ‘be sound-minded’ are the same **165A** as the inscription declares, and so do I. But someone could presume that they are different, and I think that is what happened to those who dedicated the later inscriptions, ‘Nothing in Excess’ and ‘Give a Pledge and Ruin is Nigh’. In fact these men thought that ‘Know Thyself’ was a piece of advice, rather than a salutation by the god, for the sake of those who enter the temple. Accordingly, they dedicated these inscriptions so that they could offer advice that was every bit as useful.

“Now then, Socrates, the reason why I am saying all this is as follows: I am retracting everything that was said previously; **165B** perhaps you said something on these issues that was more correct, perhaps I did, but nothing we were saying was particularly clear. Yet I am prepared now to present you with an argument for this, if you still do not accept that sound-mindedness is recognising your own self.”

“But Critias,” said I, “you are addressing me as if I profess to have knowledge of the issues I am asking you about, and could agree with you if I wanted to, but that is not how matters stand. No, in fact I am investigating anything that is ever put forward, along with you,

because I myself do not know. [165C] So I am prepared to say whether I accept, or do not accept, once I have considered this, but please wait until I consider it."

"Consider it then," said he.

"Yes indeed," said I, "I am considering it. Well, if sound-mindedness is recognising something, it would obviously be a knowledge, and a knowledge of something, wouldn't it?"

"It would," said he. "Of yourself."

"Isn't medicine knowledge of health?" I asked.

"Entirely so."

"Then," said I, "if you were to ask me, 'since medicine is knowledge of health, what use is it to us and what does it bring about?' I would reply [165D] that it is a considerable benefit, since it brings about health, a good outcome for us, if you accept this."

"I accept this."

"Then if you should also ask me, 'since housebuilding is the knowledge of building houses, what outcome do I say it produces?' I would say, 'houses', and the same goes for the other skills. Now since you say it is knowledge of yourself, you should indeed be able to speak on behalf of sound-mindedness, if you are asked, 'Critias, since sound-mindedness is knowledge [165E] of yourself, what good outcome does it bring about for us, worthy of its name?' Come on, speak."

"But Socrates," said he, "you are not investigating this correctly, for this knowledge is not like in nature to the other knowledges, nor are the others like one another, but you are conducting the investigation as if they are alike. Tell me then, in the case of the skill of calculation or of geometry, what outcome is there that corresponds to houses in the case of housebuilding, or a garment in the case of weaving, or other outcomes like these, the various products of various skills that one could point to? Well are you also able to point out [166A] an outcome of this kind to me in these two cases? No, you will not be able to do so."

"And" I replied, "what you say is true, but I am able to point out to you something that each of these knowledges is knowledge of, something that happens to be other than the knowledge itself. For example, calculation is presumably of the even and the odd, how they relate to themselves and to one another in quantity. Is this so?"

"Very much so," he replied.

"Aren't the even and the odd different from calculation itself?"

"How could they not be?"

166B "Then again, although weighing is weighing of the heavier and lighter weight, the heavy and the light are different from weighing itself. Do you agree?"

"I do."

"Then state what it is that sound-mindedness is knowledge of, something that happens to be different from sound-mindedness itself."

"That is my point, Socrates," said he. "You arrive in your enquiry at the very thing that distinguishes sound-mindedness from all the knowledges, but now you are investigating some likeness to the others. But that is not how matters stand. **166C** Rather, although all the others are knowledge of another, but not of themselves, this one, alone, is knowledge of the other knowledges and of itself. And this has not escaped your notice, far from it. No, I think you are now doing what you denied you were doing just now; you are just trying to refute me, and you have abandoned the issue that the argument is concerned with."

"What an assumption to make," said I, "that if I am refuting you, as best I can, I am refuting you from any other motive than the very motive from which I would also scrutinise what I myself **166D** am saying, for fear that I might ever, unwittingly, be thinking I know something when I do not know. And so I now declare that this is what I am doing: considering the argument, most of all for the sake of myself, but also perhaps for my other companions. Or don't you think it is a good, common to almost all of humanity, that each of the things that are comes to be seen clearly just as it is?"

"I do, Socrates," said he, "very much so."

"Then, blessed man, be bold in answering the question, based on how it appears to you, and never mind whether it is Critias or **166E** Socrates who is being refuted. Just apply your mind to the argument itself and consider how exactly it turns out under scrutiny."

"Yes," said he, "that's what I'll do, since what you are saying sounds reasonable to me."

"Then," said I, "explain. What are you saying about sound-mindedness?"

"Well," said he, "I am saying that of all the other knowledges, it alone is knowledge, both of itself and the other knowledges."

"In that case," said I, "wouldn't it also be knowledge of lack of knowledge, if it is indeed knowledge of knowledge?"

"Entirely so," he said.

167A "So only the sound-minded man will, himself, recognise himself, and will be able to examine what he happens to know, and not know. And in like manner he will have the power to determine what other people know and think they know, and what he himself thinks he knows but does not know. No one else will be able to do this. And this is what being sound-

minded, and sound-mindedness, and recognising one's own self, actually are: knowing what one knows, and what one does not know. So, is this what you mean?"

"I do," he replied.

"Then, once more," said I, 'the third time for the Saviour', as if we were startingv[167B] anew, let us first consider whether something like this is possible or not: knowing that one knows, and that one does not know, what one knows, and what one does not know. And secondly, if this is at all possible, let us consider what benefit we would derive from knowing this."

"Yes," said he, "we should consider this."

"Come on then, Critias," said I, "let us see if you turn out to be more resourceful than I am in dealing with these matters. For I am actually perplexed. Shall I tell you why I am perplexed?"

"Yes, certainly," he said.

"Well," said I, "if it is as you were just saying it is, wouldn't all these be a single knowledge, which is [167C] not knowledge of anything else except itself and the other knowledges? And what is more, this same knowledge is knowledge of lack of knowledge."

"Entirely so."

"Do you see, my friend, how strange the assertion we are trying to make actually is? For in other cases, if you consider them, the same situation will, I think, surely seem impossible to you."

"In what way and in what cases?"

"In the following cases. Indeed you need to decide if, in your opinion, there is some seeing which is not a seeing of whatever the other seeings are seeings of, but is, rather, a seeing of itself and the other seeings, and of lack of seeing too, in like manner. And even though it is a seeing, it sees no colour, [167D] just itself and the other seeings. Does there seem to you to be such a seeing?"

"By Zeus, not to me."

"And what about hearing that does not hear a single sound, but does hear itself, and the other hearings, and lack of hearing?"

"No, not this either."

"Then, to sum up, in the case of all the sense perceptions, consider whether in your opinion there is any perception that is perception of perceptions and of itself, whilst perceiving nothing of what the other perceptions perceive."

"It doesn't seem so to me, at any rate."

167E "Well, do you think there is any desire that is not a desire for any pleasure at all, but for itself and the other desires?"

"Of course not."

"Nor indeed, I presume, is there a wish that wishes for nothing good, but does wish for itself and the other wishes."

"Indeed not."

"And would you say that there is a kind of love that happens to be a love of nothing noble, but is love of itself and the other loves?"

"Not I," he replied.

"And have you ever observed any fear that fears itself and the other **168A** fears, but does not fear anything dreadful at all?"

"I have not observed one," he replied.

"Or an opinion that is an opinion of opinions and of itself, but forms an opinion of nothing that the others form opinions of?"

"Not at all."

"But we are saying, it seems, that there is some knowledge that is of this kind, one that, although it is knowledge of nothing that is learned, is yet a knowledge of itself and the other knowledges."

"We are saying so," indeed.

"But if it turns out that there really is such a knowledge, isn't it strange? Indeed we should not yet affirm, definitely, that there is not, rather we should still consider whether there is such knowledge."

168B "Correct."

"Come on then, this knowledge is knowledge of something, and it possesses a power of this kind so as to be 'of something'. Isn't this so?"

"Entirely so."

"And indeed, we say the greater possesses a power of this kind, so as to be greater 'than something'."

"It possesses it, indeed."

"If indeed it is to be greater, won't it be greater than something lesser?"

"Necessarily."

"Now if we were to discover some greater, that is greater than the 'greaters' and than itself, but greater than nothing that the other 'greaters' are greater than, presumably it would be entirely **168C** in the situation whereby, if it were indeed greater than itself, it would also be less than itself, wouldn't it?"

"Necessarily, Socrates, very much so."

"What is more, if something is a double of the other doubles, and of itself, then being a double of the others, and of itself, it would then of course be a half, for a double is presumably double of nothing other than a half."

"True."

"Won't then what is more than itself also be less than itself; what is heavier, lighter; what is older, younger; and in the same way in all **168D** other cases, won't whatever has the power of itself, directed towards itself, also possess the being towards which its power was directed? I mean something like the following: we say that hearing, for instance, would be hearing of nothing else except sound. Is this so?"

"Yes."

"In that case, if hearing is indeed to hear itself, it will hear itself as possessing sound, for otherwise it would not hear."

"Most necessarily."

"Seeing too, I presume, best of men, if it is indeed to see itself, needs itself to possess some colour, for seeing could never see **168E** anything devoid of colour."

"Indeed it could not."

"Well, Critias, do you see that so far, in working through this, in some cases it appears absolutely impossible to us, and in other cases barely credible that they have the power of themselves directed towards themselves? In fact, in the case of magnitude and quantity and the like, it is absolutely impossible, isn't it?"

"Entirely so."

"Then again, hearing and seeing, and even motion itself moving itself, and heat burning itself, and all other cases of this sort, would be met with incredulity **169A** by some, but perhaps not by others. So my friend, there is a need for some great man who will determine satisfactorily, in all cases, whether none of the things that are, have by nature the power of themselves directed towards themselves,[14] rather than something else, or whether some do, and others do

[14] Following Schleiemacher

not. And if there are cases where their power is directed towards themselves, is there among them a knowledge which we declare to be sound-mindedness? Therefore I do not trust myself to be up to the task of affirming any of this, either that this can happen that there is a knowledge of knowledge, **169B** or even if there really is, I cannot accept that this is sound-mindedness until I consider whether something like this would benefit us or not, for I actually have a presentiment that sound-mindedness is something beneficial and good. So, son of Callaeschrus, since you propose that sound-mindedness is knowledge of knowledge and indeed of lack of knowledge, you should first show that what I was just speaking of is possible, and then, that as well as being possible is also beneficial, **169C** and you will, perhaps, satisfy me that what you are saying about what sound-mindedness is, is correct."

Well when Critias had heard all this and saw how perplexed I was, then like people who see others yawning in front of them and do the same thing themselves, he seemed to me to have been forced by my perplexity and been overcome by perplexity himself. Now since he was a man with an enduring reputation, he felt ashamed before the company and was unwilling to accept my point that he was incapable of making the distinctions I was asking him **169D** to make, and to hide his perplexity he did not say anything definite.

So in order that our argument might proceed, I said, "But, Critias, if you like, let us accept for now that there can be a knowledge of knowledge, and we shall consider on another occasion whether this is indeed the case or not. Come on then, if this is entirely possible, is it any more possible to know what one knows, and does not know? Since surely, according to us, this is recognising yourself, and being sound-minded. Is this so?"

"Entirely so," said he, "I presume that follows at least. For **169E** if someone has knowledge that itself recognises itself, such a person would be just like what he possesses; just as when someone possesses speed, he is fast; when someone possesses beauty, he is beautiful; and when he possesses recognition, he recognises; and when someone possesses recognition of recognition itself, he will then, presumably, be recognising his own self."

"I am not," said I, "disputing the contention that whenever someone possesses that which recognises itself, he himself will recognise his own self, but why it is necessary for someone who possesses this to know what he knows and what he does not know."

170A "Because, Socrates, this is the same as that."

"Perhaps," said I, "but I am afraid I am still as confused as ever, for I do not understand how knowing what one knows, and knowing what someone does not know, are the same as self-knowledge."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"As follows," I replied. "Assuming that there is knowledge of knowledge, will it be able to do anything more than make a distinction whereby, of these two, this is knowledge and this is not knowledge?"

“No, that is the extent of it.”

“Now, are knowledge and lack of knowledge of health, [170B] and knowledge and lack of knowledge of justice, the same?”

“Not at all.”

“No. One, I believe, is medicine, the other is statesmanship, while knowledge is nothing other than knowledge.”

“How could it not be?”

“What if someone were not to have the additional knowledge of health and justice, but recognised knowledge alone? Since he had knowledge of this alone, he would be likely to recognise merely that he has knowledge of something, and that he has some knowledge concerning himself and concerning the others too. Is this so?”

“Yes.”

“But how will he recognise what he knows by means of this knowledge? For he recognises [170C] what is healthy by medicine, but not by sound-mindedness, and what is harmonious by music, but not by sound-mindedness, and housebuilding by construction, but not by sound-mindedness, and the same goes for them all. Isn’t this so? “

“Apparently.”

“But if indeed sound-mindedness is only knowledge of knowledges, how will he know by this that he is recognising what the healthy is or what housebuilding is?”

“He will not, not at all.”

“Then someone ignorant of this will not know what he knows; he will only know that he knows.”

“So it seems.”

[170D] “So being sound-minded would not be this – knowing what one knows and what one does not know – but only, it seems, knowing that one knows and that one does not know.”

“Quite likely.”

“Nor will this person be able to examine whether someone else who claims to know something, knows or does not know what he claims to know. Rather, it seems, he will only recognise that the man has some knowledge, but sound-mindedness will not enable him to recognise what the knowledge is knowledge of.”

“Apparently not.”

170E "So he will not be able to judge who is pretending to be a physician when he is not, and who is truly so, nor who else is knowledgeable and who is not. Let us consider it as follows: if the sound-minded person or anyone else at all is going to recognise who truly is a physician and who is not, there is something he will not do, he will surely not discuss medicine with him, for the physician as we said has knowledge of nothing except health and disease. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, just so."

"And yet he knows nothing about knowledge, since we assigned this to sound-mindedness alone."

"Yes."

"Then the physician knows nothing about medicine, since medicine 171A happens to be knowledge."

"True."

"So the sound-minded person will recognise that the physician has some knowledge, but if it is necessary to apprehend what it is, won't he need to consider what it is knowledge of? Or isn't each knowledge defined by this, not only as knowledge, but also as a particular knowledge, by being knowledge of certain things?"

"By this, yes indeed."

"And medicine then is defined as different from other knowledges by being knowledge of health and disease."

"Yes."

"Doesn't someone who wishes to consider medicine 171B need to consider it in respect of the things it is concerned with, not of course in respect of the things it is not concerned with, that is, in respect of what is external to it?"

"Of course not."

"So anyone considering this aright will investigate how the physician is a physician in relation to cases of health and disease."

"So it seems."

"Won't he do so by considering whether what is said or done in these cases is spoken truly, and done correctly?"

"Necessarily."

"Now would someone without medical knowledge be able to follow up on either of these?"

"Not at all."

171C "Then it seems no one else except the physician could do so, certainly not the sound-minded man; for in that case, in addition to his sound-mindedness, he would be a physician."

"That is the case."

"So, it is all the more evident that if sound-mindedness is knowledge only of knowledge and of lack of knowledge, it will be unable to distinguish between a physician who is knowledgeable in respect of that skill, and one who is not knowledgeable, yet pretends to be such, or thinks he is such, nor anyone else who is knowledgeable in any matter at all, apart from someone with a similar skill to his own, as in the case with other practitioners."

"Apparently so," he said.

171D "Well then, Critias," said I, "if sound-mindedness is like this, what benefit might we still derive from it? For if, as we have been proposing all along, the sound-minded person knows what he knows and knows that he knows this, and knows what he does not know and knows that he does not know this, and he is able to investigate this same state of affairs in someone else, then we affirm that it would be of enormous benefit for us to be sound-minded. For we would live out our life free from error; we, and those who possess sound-mindedness, and anyone else who comes under our rule. Nor indeed 171E would we attempt to do things we did not have knowledge of. Rather we would find people who were knowledgeable and hand matters over to them. Nor would we trust others who had come under our rule to do anything else, apart from what they were going to do in the right way, and this would be something they had knowledge of. And in this way, under sound-mindedness a household will be nobly managed, a city nobly governed, and so on for anything else that sound-mindedness might rule over. For with error eliminated 172A and correctness in the ascendant, people in this situation necessarily fare nobly and well in everything they do, and those who fare well are blessed. Well, isn't this how we were speaking about sound-mindedness, Critias, when explaining the extent to which knowing what one knows and does not know would be good?"

"Yes, certainly, that is how."

"But now you see," said I, "that no knowledge anywhere has proved to be like this."

"I see," he said.

172B "Well then," I asked, "does sound-mindedness, which we are now discovering to be knowledge of knowledge and its absence, possess this good? Will someone who possesses this learn whatever else he learns more easily, and will everything appear to him in greater clarity, since in addition to the particular thing he learns, he will also behold the knowledge? And will he better scrutinise others about what he himself has learned, while those who conduct the scrutiny in the absence of this will do so in a less effective and inferior manner? So, my friend, are these the sorts of 172C benefits we shall derive from sound-mindedness, or

are we looking upon it as something greater, and requiring it to be something greater than it actually is?"

"That may very well be the situation," he replied.

"Perhaps," said I, "and perhaps we investigated nothing useful. My evidence is the fact that if it is like this, some strange things about sound-mindedness are becoming plain to me. Indeed, let us look at it, if you wish, by conceding that it is possible to have knowledge of knowledge, and let us not withdraw **172D** what we proposed at the outset: that sound-mindedness is knowing what one knows, and what one does not know. Let us accept this. And having accepted all this, let us consider, even better, whether it will actually benefit us at all, if it is like this. For I do not think we were right in agreeing just now that sound-mindedness would be a great good when presiding over the management of households and cities, if it were like this."

"How so?" he asked.

"Because," said I, "we agreed quite readily that it would be an enormous good for humanity if each of us were to do what he knows, and were to hand over what he does not know to others who are knowledgeable."

172E "Well," said he, "were we not right to agree to this?"

"I do not think we were," said I.

"What you are saying is truly strange, Socrates,"said he.

"Yes, by the dog," said I, "that is how it seems to me too. And when I noticed this at the time, and just now, I said that strange things were dawning upon me and that I was afraid that we might not be considering this aright. For in truth, if sound-mindedness really is like this, it is not at all obvious **173A** to me that it produces any good for us."

"How so?" said he. "Speak, so that we too may understand what you mean."

"Although I think I am talking nonsense," said I, "nevertheless, it is necessary at least to consider what is dawning upon us, and not pass on aimlessly, if one cares about oneself even a little."

"Yes, well expressed," said he.

"Then hear my dream," said I, "whether it has come through horn or through ivory.[15] For if sound-mindedness, being as we are now defining it, were to rule us as much as possible, everything would surely be done based upon knowledge, **173B** and no one claiming to be a pilot when he is not could deceive us, nor could a physician, a general, or anyone else

[15] This is a reference to *Odyssey* xix.564–567 where it is said of dreams that true ones come through the horn gate, while deceitful ones come through the ivory gate.

pretending to know something he does not know, go undetected. Then under these circumstances, what other outcome could there be for us except that our bodies be healthy, more so than now, that we be safe amid the perils of the sea and of warfare, and that all [173C] our equipment, our clothes, our shoes, and everything we make use of, and much else besides, be made for us in a more skilful manner through recourse to true practitioners? And if you wish, let us also concede that divination is knowledge of what is to come, and that sound-mindedness, when presiding over this, will turn away the pretenders and install the true diviners for us as prophets of what is to come. I accept that the human race, equipped in this way, would act and live knowledgeably, [173D] since sound-mindedness, acting as guardian, would not allow lack of knowledge to creep in and work alongside us. But we are not yet able to understand that by acting knowledgeably, we would act well and would be blessed, my friend, Critias."

"And yet," said he, "you will not easily find some other end of acting well if you reject acting knowledgeably."

"Well," said I, "besides this, teach me a little more. 'Knowledgeably' of what? Do you mean of shoemaking?"

[173E] "By Zeus! No!"

"Of brassworking then?"

"Not at all."

"Of wool then, or of wood, or something else of this sort?"

"Of course not."

"In that case," said I, "we are no longer abiding by the statement that someone living knowledgeably is happy. For you do not accept that these people, although they live knowledgeably, are happy. No, you seem to me to define the man who is happy as living knowledgeably in particular respects. And perhaps you are referring to the man I just spoke of, the one who knows all that is to come, the diviner. Are you referring to this [174A] man, or to someone else?"

"I am referring," said he, "both to this man and to someone else."

"To whom?" I asked. "Isn't it someone like this, someone who, in addition to all that is to come and all that has come to be, might also know all that now is, and might be ignorant of nothing? Let us propose that there is such a man. Indeed I do not think you would say that anyone alive is more knowledgeable than this."

"Of course not."

"Well I am longing to know this besides: Which of the knowledges makes him happy, or are they all alike in this respect?"

“No, they are not at all alike,” he replied.

174B “Then what particular sort of knowledge is it? Among things that are, and things that have come to be, and things that will come to be, this is the knowledge by which we know what? Well is it the knowledge by which I know draught-playing?”

“What? Draught-playing!” said he.

“Is it calculation then?”

“Not at all.”

“Is it health then?”

“More so,” he replied.

“The particular knowledge I am referring to is the one by which we know what?”

“That by which we know the good and the bad,” said he.

“You wretch!” said I. “You have been dragging me around in a circle all the time, concealing the fact that it is not living knowledgeably that makes us do well and be happy, **174C** not even knowledge of all the other knowledges together, but this one knowledge alone, the one concerned with the good and the bad. So, Critias, if you are prepared to take this knowledge away from the other knowledges, will medicine make us healthy any the less, or shoe-making make shoes, or weaving make clothes any the less, or piloting prevent us from dying at sea, or generalship from dying in battle, any the less?”

“No less,” said he.

“But, friend Critias, in the absence of this knowledge, we lose out on having each of these tasks done **174D** well and beneficially.”

“That is true.”

“And yet this knowledge, it seems, is not sound-mindedness, but a knowledge whose function is to benefit us. For it is not the knowledge of knowledges and their lack, but of good and bad, and so, if this is beneficial, then sound-mindedness would be something else for us.”

“But why would this knowledge not be beneficial? For if sound-mindedness really is knowledge of knowledges, it also presides over **174E** the other knowledges, and would surely be of benefit to us by ruling over this knowledge concerning the good.”

“And would this knowledge make us healthy,” said I, “and would medicine not do so? And would this perform the other functions belonging to the other skills, and would each of them not perform its own function? Or didn’t we affirm some time ago that it is the knowledge of knowledges and of lack of knowledge alone, and of nothing else? Isn’t this so?”

“Yes, apparently.”

“Then it will not be an artificer of health, will it?”

“Of course not.”

175A “For health belonged to a different skill, didn’t it?”

“To a different one, yes.”

“Nor is it an artificer of benefit, my friend, for again we assigned this function to another skill just now, didn’t we?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“How then will sound-mindedness be beneficial when it is not the artificer of a single benefit?”

“It is not beneficial at all, Socrates, so it seems at least.”

“Do you see, Critias, that I had good reason for my fears a while ago, and that I was justified in accusing myself of not considering anything useful in relation to sound-mindedness? For presumably, what is agreed **175B** to be the noblest thing of all would not have appeared to be devoid of benefit to us, if I had been of any use in conducting a proper investigation. But now we have the worst of it in every way, and we are not able to discover to which of the things that are, the lawgiver ever gave this name, sound-mindedness.

“What is more, much of what we have conceded does not follow from our argument. In fact we conceded that there is knowledge of knowledge, even though the argument does not allow this, nor does it declare that there is. And again, even though the argument does not allow this, we conceded **175C** that this knowledge also recognises the functions of the other knowledges, so that our sound-minded person might be knowledgeable of what he knows and what he does not know, that he knew the one and did not know the other. And although we conceded this in an altogether high-minded manner, just because our own agreement states that he knows the things that he does not know, we did not investigate the impossibility of someone, somehow or other, knowing what he does not know at all, and yet I think nothing could appear more irrational than this. But nevertheless, the investigation, having found **175D** us so simplistic and malleable, is still no more capable of discovering the truth. Rather, it laughs at truth to such an extent that although we have for some time been coming to an agreement and developing a proposition that this is what sound-mindedness is, it revealed to us, very contemptuously, that this is of no benefit.

“Now, although I am less concerned for myself, I am very concerned for you, Charmides,” said I, “if you, with a body like this and a very sound-minded **175E** soul besides, will not profit from this sound-mindedness, and its presence will be of no benefit to you in life. And I am even more concerned for the incantation I learned from the Thracian, if I have learned it with

great eagerness when it is something of no value. Now I do not think this is actually how matters stand. I think, rather, that I am a poor investigator, since sound-mindedness is a great good, and if you do indeed possess it, you are fortunate. [176A] But see if you do possess it and have no need of the incantation. For if you possess it, I should advise you rather to presume that I am a babbler, unable to investigate any argument whatsoever, while you yourself, being more sound-minded, are also happier to that extent."

And Charmides said, "By Zeus, Socrates, I do not know whether I possess this or not. Indeed how could I know when you say [176B] the two of you are unable to discover what precisely it is? However I am not entirely persuaded by you, Socrates, and I think I myself am much in need of the incantation, and for my own part there is no reason why I should not hear the incantation from you, day after day, until you say I have had enough."

"So be it," said Critias, "but Charmides, if you do this it will prove, at least to me, that you are sound-minded if you submit to Socrates to hear the incantation, and are not found wanting in this to any extent whatsoever."

"You may presume that I shall follow him," he said, and not be found wanting. For [176C] I would be acting terribly if I were to disregard you, my guardian, and not do what you told me to do."

"Well then," said he, "I am telling you to do so."

"Then I shall do so," he said, "beginning this very day. "

"What are you two planning to do?" I asked.

"Nothing," said Charmides, "we have done our planning."

"So are you going to use force and not grant me a preliminary hearing?" I asked.

"You may presume that I shall use force since this man here has ordered me to. You for your part should plan what you will do in response to this."

[176D] "But that leaves no room for any plan at all," said I, "for when the two of you undertake a course of action and do so by force, there is no man alive who will be able to oppose you."

"Then you should not oppose us either," said he.

"Then," said I, "I shall not oppose you."

End